

Amendment to the Claims:

The claim listing which begins on the next page will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claim Listing

1-10 Cancelled.

11. (New) A pigment exhibiting a color-shifting effect comprising

- a base material;
- a first layer;
- a second layer;
- a third layer; and
- optionally an outer protective layer,

wherein

- said base material is a mica;
- said first layer and said third layer each independently comprise a metal oxide having a high refractive index;
- said second layer comprises a metal oxide having a low refractive index; and
- said base material is coated with (1) said first layer, (2) said second layer, (3) said third layer, and optionally (4) said outer protective layer, said first layer being in direct contact with said base material, said second layer being in direct contact with said first layer and said third layer, and said protective layer being in direct contact with said third layer.

12. (New) The pigment of claim 11, wherein the thickness of said first layer is between the optical thickness of the silver-white interference color and the optical thickness of the golden-yellow interference color.

13. (New) The pigment of claim 11, wherein the thickness of said second layer is greater than the optical thickness of the 2nd-order interference color.

14. (New) The pigment of claim 11, wherein the thickness of said second layer is between the optical thickness of 2nd-order green interference color and the optical thickness of the 4th-order interference color.

15. (New) The pigment of claim 11, wherein said metal oxide having a low refractive index is SiO₂.

16. (New) The pigment of claim 11, wherein said metal oxide having a high refractive index is selected from TiO₂, SnO₂, Fe₂O₃, Fe₃O₄, CoO, Co₂O₃, ZrO₂, Cr₂O₃, and mixtures and derivatives thereof.

17. (New) The pigment of claim 11, wherein said outer protective layer is an organic or an inorganic ferrous pigment.

18. (New) A method of preparing a pigment exhibiting a color-shifting effect comprising the steps of

- (i) heating mica powder suspension in water;
- (ii) adjusting the pH value of the mixture to between 2 and 9 by adding a diluted aqueous hydrochloric acid solution or a diluted aqueous sodium hydroxide solution;
- (iii) adding a first inorganic salt solution;
- (iv) maintaining the pH value of the mixture constant by adding a diluted aqueous hydrochloric acid solution or a diluted aqueous sodium hydroxide solution;
- (v) stirring the mixture at constant temperature;
- (vi) adjusting the pH value of the mixture to between 6 and 14 by adding a diluted aqueous hydrochloric acid solution or a diluted aqueous sodium hydroxide solution;
- (vii) adding a second inorganic salt solution;
- (viii) maintaining the pH value of the mixture constant by adding a diluted aqueous hydrochloric acid solution or a diluted aqueous sodium hydroxide solution;
- (ix) stirring the mixture at constant temperature;
- (x) adjusting the pH value of the mixture to between 2 and 9 by adding a diluted aqueous hydrochloric acid solution or a diluted aqueous sodium hydroxide solution;
- (xi) adding a first inorganic salt solution;
- (xii) maintaining the pH value of the mixture constant by adding a diluted aqueous hydrochloric acid solution or a diluted aqueous sodium hydroxide solution;

(xiii) stirring the mixture at constant temperature.

19. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said first inorganic salt solution comprises one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of TiCl_4 , TiOCl_2 , SnCl_4 , SnCl_2 , FeCl_3 , FeCl_2 , CoCl_2 , ZrOCl_2 and CrCl_3 .

20. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said second inorganic salt solution comprises sodium silicate.

21. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein in step (i) the temperature is maintained at 60-90°C.

22. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein in steps (v), (ix), and (xiii) the mixture is stirred at constant temperature for a period of about 30 minutes.

23. (New) The method of claim 18 comprising further as step (xiv) flittering of the pigment, washing it, drying it, and optionally calcining it.